

Companion

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The title of a Royal Arch Mason is "Companion" and it is this name which we are going to examine today. Webster's New World Dictionary defines companion as:

1. A person who associates with or accompanies another or others; associate; comrade.
2. A person employed to live or travel with another.
3. A member of the lowest rank in an order of knighthood.
4. A thing that matches another in sort, color, etc.; one of a pair or set.

What is interesting is the etymology of the word which from its Latin roots (com-with + panis-bread) and its subsequent like uses in ME T oft means bread fellow, mess mate (Goth one who eats of the same bread). The point of the sharing of bread needs to be looked at more closely as it is essential to rest of this discussion.

To share one's bread with another was a far more intimate act in the days before the modern mass production and widely marketed commodity we enjoy today. It gave status essentially of that equal with a person's family. It was the sharing of Life itself with someone whom you had no blood link to.

The sharing of bread and salt (another precious and hard-won commodity) was ritually performed to solemnize an important meeting or cement a relationship. The very

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importance of bread as a symbol of life and health was very deeply felt in ancient cultures around the Mediterranean Sea.

To break bread with someone was a sign and pledge of peace and cordial relations. To turn your hand against one with which you had shared bread was considered a heinous offense and often met with harsh treatment for the offender. Even in today's culture it is considered an honor to be invited to dine with someone. The feeling that you have been deemed worthy to be included at table with a peer or superior is truly exhilarating.

In light of this intimate relationship let us further examine the definition of this word as it relates to the craft.

The first is a person who associates with or accompanies another or others; associate; comrade. Are we not known by those with whom we are associated with? The crowd you travel in marks the image by which others will judge you. Those you choose as associates, business and public persons you deal with in society. Also, your comrades, the ones you pick as friends. Each of these choices have consequences as to your public and private character and the perception of the craft abroad in the world. Remember that in a herd the individual is obscured by the effect of the herd's sameness and conformity of its members to the group. If you tie yourself to questionable company or bad companions you would most likely be tarred as it were the same brush.

Therefore, the craft is ill served by people who have bad associations or continue to keep bad company. They would tarnish the image and reputation of the fraternity and put off those who would possibly consider joining it.

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We should at all times seek to keep the companionship of our fellow craftsmen, to hold to the friendship of those who already hold to the ideals we are convinced are superior to that of the world's.

The second a person employed to live or travel with another. In today's society we do not often see this as it was in the times past. It is an old and honorable profession to be a personal companion. The purpose was to share the load of living solo or traveling to far and unfamiliar lands. It was the duty of the companion to assist the partner or master/mistress with the daily chores and provide social company. When a traveling companion, they looked out for the party's arrangements and if the principle became incapacitated due to illness or other distress they were responsible for seeing to the care of them. History is replete with examples of famous companions and their often intimate relationships (not sexual). The best and truest companions were intimate with the relationships growing stronger over the years. It goes without saying that a great deal of trust must go into the steadfastness of one's companion.

We as Royal Arch Masons are engaged to be companions one to another. We should look out for each as we travel through this world of trial and vicissitude so that we all should reach the end well and true. There can be no doubt that we are bound by oath to be sociable and considerate to each other. Even the great book of divine law tells us that we should consider a brother's welfare as if it were our own.

When beset with difficulties, you are feeling isolated and alone it is the knowledge a trusty reliable companion is there to stand by your side to give comfort and support that makes you able to persevere. You are that companion, or should be, remembering that you one day could be in need (remember the Mark Master and Select Master Degrees).

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To keep the faith and remain sociable is a trait we should all inculcate (most Excellent Master Degree).

This is our engagement, the wages of which are friendship and relations which are few in this world will find otherwise.

The third was a member of the lowest rank in an order of knighthood. Now it seems that this would little to do with the Royal Arch System as we are not a "Knighted Order". Actually you would be right but also wrong. Although we do not use the term of Knight with the title of Sir, yet we are an exalted and royal order. The lowest order of nobility, were the knights and senior stewards of the household. The stewards were the head servants and craftsmen who, in many cases were long time retainers or distant relatives who lived with the family. Their duties lay in the realm of keeping up the household, protecting and caring for the family and household staff. The place they held in their society was to see that proper decorum and behavior prevailed at all times. They also saw to it that the guests of the house were properly cared for and would often travel with their masters/mistresses to attend them and ward them from danger.

This lesser nobility stood at the interface of the higher nobility and the common man. It was responsible for the day to day governing of the people and struck a balance between societies several parts. Thus we as Royal Arch Masons stand at the balance point of Masonry and should work at all times to increase that harmony which should characterize all of Masonry.

We should as an exalted body stand to our duty of service and joining societies and the fraternity's various parts: That perfect example of who can best work and best agree.

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This brings us to the final definition, a thing that matches another in sort, color, etc.; one of a pair or set. The matter of our character should be perceived as being of one single set. Our goal is to be indistinguishable in our values so as to give the world a good opinion of the craft. All of Masonry is in large part about coming together as a society of equals with peace and harmony. This is our reason for the call to be of the highest character with a ready heart to be of forward thinking in regards to the whole of mankind.

Throughout all of our ritual we see the importance of companionship and its responsibilities as men and Masons. Each of the definitions we have here seen here points us to that true meaning of what we have named ourselves. The duty of each of us is to refine that definition in our lives and work to make ourselves true companions In our fraternity and in the world.

As with all such talks we must as the TV disclaimer says it has been edited to fit in this time frame and fit this screen. There is always so much more that can be said about each and every idea set forth, but that I leave to you. It is to you to study as a good craftsman to prove yourself worthy. I thank you for this opportunity to share my thoughts with you.